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# Review: Irene Ceccherini, Sozomeno da Pistoia (1387–1458): Scrittura e libri di un umanista.

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processes, exercises, forms, and structures. Aside from providing paradigms, imaginative resources, metaphors, and models, grammar-school books are useful to poets because they embody how the encounter with sapiential knowledge is always, at least in its best form, a re-encounter: the importing and reinventing of Latinate grammar forms into vernacular English poetry allows English poets and their poems to spool out knowledge that *feels* familiar while being, at the same time, new. Grammar-school proverbs are metabolized into English poetry not simply (and, Cannon argues, not even primarily) for their content, but for the particular comfort that their styles and structures embody: “the proverb meant most when it was re-encountered, after having been well-learned in school . . . *everything* the schoolboy learned first seems to have become as familiar to him as any proverb is to us now” (231). Grammar-school style is about innovation and recognition, experiment and expectation, and English and Latin, not as opposed categories, but as fluid and mutually interpenetrating strategies for poetic making.

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IRENE CECCHERINI, *Sozomeno da Pistoia (1387–1458): Scrittura e libri di un umanista*, with a foreword by Stefano Zamponi and an essay by David Speranzi. (Biblioteca dell’ “Archivum Romanicum”, Serie 1: Storia, Letteratura, Paleografia 431.) Florence: Leo Olschki, 2016. Paper. Pp. xix, 466; many black-and-white plates, 10 black-and-white figures, and 4 tables. €65. ISBN: 978-8-8222-6343-8. doi:10.1086/698379

Zomino of Pistoia (1387–1458), who preferred the Hellenized name Sozomeno, was a notable figure in fifteenth-century humanism. He studied Greek under Guarino da Verona in Florence, attended the Council of Constance, where he profited from the exciting discoveries of ancient manuscripts by Poggio and others, taught Latin poetry and rhetoric in Pistoia and Florence (both privately and at the Florentine Studio), wrote commentaries on several Roman poets, and composed (but did not finish) a mammoth historical work, *Chronicon universale*. Above all, however, he collected, transcribed, commissioned, and annotated ancient texts in both Latin and Greek, amassing well over a hundred volumes, which he left to the Opera di San Iacopo in Pistoia to serve as a public library.

Irene Ceccherini’s volume is a detailed catalogue and description of Sozomeno’s library. Her work is the culmination of the first phase of a major collaborative research project, “Sozomeno da Pistoia (1387–1458),” headed by Stefano Zamponi of the Università degli Studi di Firenze and funded by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pistoia e Pescia, which was launched in 2008 and has operated a website since 2009, <http://www.sozomeno.fondazionecript.it>. The website now includes, *inter alia*, a list of Sozomeno’s manuscripts with a photograph and brief description of each and a substantial bibliography of relevant works, as well as a description of the Sozomeno project and indications of its future undertakings (for example, studies of Sozomeno’s commentaries and a digital archive).

Ceccherini’s volume is the major piece of the project and will surely be the basis of all future work on Sozomeno. Its large principal section, the manuscript catalogue, is preceded by two essays. The first is a brief introduction to the Sozomeno project with a biography of Sozomeno by Stefano Zamponi. The second, by Ceccherini, appropriately titled “Sozomeno e i suoi libri,” places the manuscripts in the context of Sozomeno’s intellectual formation, career, and interests over time, basing its argument on a detailed and useful analysis of the manuscripts by date, source, contents, and script. Several valuable appendices follow the catalogue, including the text of the inventory of Sozomeno’s books made in 1460, a concordance of the inventory and Ceccherini’s catalogue, a table relating the dates and contents

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of the manuscripts to their codicological details, and an essay by David Speranzi on Sozomeno's Greek manuscripts. The appendices are followed by a large section of one hundred twenty clear and legible photographs, each showing a full page of the relevant manuscript. The volume concludes with a large bibliography and several helpful indices.

Ceccherini's volume, important as it is for Sozomeno himself, will also be an excellent resource for students of Italian humanism in general, whether they are interested in codicology and the development of humanistic script, the reception of particular authors, Renaissance commentaries and teaching (Sozomeno undoubtedly used and annotated many of his manuscripts for his lectures), or the personal and scholarly relations among individual humanists. The library itself is of great interest. Although dwarfed by the library of someone like Niccolò Niccoli, whose collection included well over six hundred and perhaps as many as eight hundred volumes, it was still relatively large for its time; the inventory made in 1460 listed one hundred ten volumes, three-quarters of which still survive in various European libraries (thirty-two are still in Pistoia). Ceccherini's catalogue of eighty-three manuscripts presents a nearly complete picture of both the library and the interests of the man who amassed it. As Zamponi says in his introduction, "[l]a biblioteca sozomeniana rappresenta un evento rilevante nella concezione delle pubbliche biblioteche in Europa ed è anche l'unica testimonianza, giunta a noi praticamente integra, di come fosse concepita una delle prime biblioteche umanistiche" (xiii).

The collection is diverse in several ways. It includes both medieval and humanist manuscripts, texts both sacred and secular, works in both Greek and Latin, and works from various sources, including a few manuscripts from the famous libraries of Petrarch and Coluccio Salutati with their annotations. (Two important examples: Petrarch owned Ceccherini 18 [London, British Library, Harley MS 5204], a twelfth-century manuscript of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Macrobius's *Commentary*; from Salutati came Ceccherini 16 [Harley MS 4838], a fourteenth-century manuscript of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*. Sozomeno added his own annotations to both manuscripts.) The principal source, however, was Sozomeno; he transcribed about half of the existing manuscripts himself (11–12). According to Ceccherini's dating, he copied his earliest manuscripts between 1402 and 1409, continued transcribing until 1427 and beyond and was still annotating manuscripts transcribed by others until around 1456 (15–20). Using the large and largely datable sample represented in the catalogue, Ceccherini traces Sozomeno's growth and interests as a nascent and finally full-fledged humanist, as well as his movement from gothic to humanistic script and the changes in his script over time. The analysis builds on, expands, and sometimes corrects Albinia de la Mare's fundamental discussion of Sozomeno in *The Handwriting of Italian Humanists* (1973–2009), 91–105.

Students of Renaissance humanism owe a debt of thanks to the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pistoia e Pescia for their enlightened support of this valuable and lasting contribution to scholarship.

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